

A Translation of Al-Fuzai's "Resolution"

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Abstract

Khalil I. Al-Fuzai (1940) is an Arab writer who wrote and published few collections of stories. In his stories, he depicts Arabian society in a simple, clear, and direct way (Dohal 2013). "Resolution" is one of his stories which addresses social issues. I translated this story because it represents a good sample of Al-Fuzai's literary writing (Dohal 2021 & 2019), telling how a man could be treated at his old age by his children.

Keywords: Al-Fuzai, Resolution, Translation, Arabian society

1. Introduction

"Resolution" is one of Al-Fuzai's short stories that depicts the relationship between a father and his children. This elderly man makes the decision to live alone after witnessing a fight between his children about who should look after him at his home.

From a cultural point of view, it is a family's responsibility to look after its old relatives particularly parents (Dohal 2013). In Arabian societies, males are the ones who assume this social job. At certain times, females play the role of males and share such responsibility.

More than this, Al-Fuzai explores the psychological consequences of such social issue on all family members. In some cases, the action and solution may come from those whom no one expects to take action. In this story, the old man decides, "Never mind... I will go to live in our old house... for I am still stronger than you imagine."

2. Translation: Resolution

The old father sits in a corner of a large room, practically plunging into a magnificent chair...¹ ruminates on the sorrow of loneliness, while light flows over the various sections of the space. While he is listening to that annoying fight between his daughter and his two kids, his agony flows, engulfing the place in grief, and these blurred strands from his past life combine in his head.

His daughter is the light in his dark night, while his two sons are echoes of a bygone song. Listening to their quarrel turns into a raging torrent of rage that grows in the hearts like branches of wrath, foliated with despair, after tears produce smiles on his lips... a day when life was young and full of promise.

Happiness no longer comforts his eyes as it once did; they saw any one of his boys stroll in front of him in a childish outfit like a pleasant light... pouring light into his affection and filling his life with joy. Their mother was a well of love and devotion, and he lost his life when she died...and if he didn't believe in Allah's all-encompassing mercy, he would have chosen death and taken it.

They are conversing without embarrassment and without knowing that he is listening intently to them, though he appears

to be absent-minded, glancing out the window into the blackness of the night as he considers the dimness of his age through their speech...and if he is unsure of himself or his wife, he may doubt if his sons are his.

"This is an idea I will not agree on," Mahmoud says to his brother Yousef, while their sister Leila listens intently. "My dilemma is that my wife does not want him to live with us, and yet I will not allow him to go to an infirmary, because this will show us up in front of everyone as unworthy."

The father begins to focus on himself... his years of experience and the sieves of hard times are being eroded. He chiseled the cliffs and ploughed the sea. He had been coming to this industrial metropolis since he was a child, looking for job. He denied himself luxury in order to provide a reasonable life for his tiny family and to provide a good education for his sons, as well as to leave them something that would help them face their circumstances if the face of time darkens and turns a cold shoulder on them. Mahmoud is afraid of his wife... he has a lot of knowledge and has worked for one of the top corporations, but he is afraid of his wife.

"If there is one unthankful, it is you... all your explanation is that your wife does not want him, yet you are financially more able than me, and your circumstances are better," Yousef says tensely. My house is too small to host all of my children...my earnings are insufficient to meet my family's needs, although you have a large salary and a new, spacious home, and one of your servants may look after him."

Is that the case? Even you, oh Yousef, the eldest, don't want to look after me! What makes you think it's so simple to say anything like that? Yousef was content with a little education, but he found success in trading following a series of failed trade deals... which instilled in him avarice and a dread of loss. And, oh Yousef, your greed isn't just something you want to practice with yourself and your children; you want to practice it with your father as well.

"Don't forget that he is our father," Leila says, tears streaming down her face. You, Mahmoud, are terrified of your wife and of what others will think, but you are not afraid of Allah or of a twinge of conscience. Yousef, you continue to whine about your money; this is not a new complaint; even if you have Korah's property, you will not allow yourself to be cruel to yourself, your family, and, finally, your children."

The feeling of failure overwhelms all senses as pain penetrates deep into the pits of the heart... it fills the heart... In the jungles of oblivion, crows of ingratitude crow, as if the perianths of all flowers of life did not open and pour out a river of nectar of sweet sensations, as if the springs of love did not erupt with streams of need and dread... staying up late at night and tiredness if one is exposed to any conceivable danger.

Both brothers are enraged by their sister's censure, as Mahmoud puts it, "How did you come to speak to us in this manner? Why don't you look after him because you're an employee and have a steady income?"

"This is my wish, and my husband embraces him as a loyal son greets his father," she says without trying to hold back tears, "but my father refuses to live with me and my spouse while he has two competent kids."

She is my daughter... if she were a son; there would be no signs of impending doom on my life's horizon. She had a good education and married a well-known man. And while staying with her is the best thing for her, I insist on my sons protecting me. She is superior to two sons.

Yousef, on the other hand, is adamantly opposed to her, saying, "It's enough... follow your counsel... we didn't come to hear one of your lectures. We came to talk about a certain topic, not to hear about your transgressions."

Emotions become tense... hints of a tense argument float about them, and a disruption is about to emerge. Despite the fact that the weather outside the room is neither hot nor humid on this spring evening, sweat is pouring down their foreheads in copious amounts, and agitation is at an all-time high. The father is completely absorbed in his silence. Since the loss of his wife, with whom he shared their little dwelling, he has found happiness and peace. Despite its vastness, the universe shrinks... concerns flood in on him as a result of his life with his two boys, where he did not receive the attention he need, and now he unhappily resides in his daughter's home.

He expects the threat to be exaggerated; he sees the heat of conversation growing the danger's potential, therefore he has no choice but to intervene to terminate the situation... he has made his ultimate decision. "Never worry... I'll go to live in our old house... for I am still stronger than you imagine," he adds, standing tall and taller than an arrow that hasn't been blunted in combat.

He doesn't feel discouraged when he takes his decision; instead, he feels successful because he can make it... and he tells himself, "Yes... I can stand, even if I'm alone."

February 5, 1994²

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Endnotes

¹ There are a few dots in the original text now and then, and I attempt to keep them to give the reader a sense of the taste of this foreign material.

² February 5, 1994 is found in the original text; it may be the date of drafting and/or writing this story.